



LC STUDY GUIDE

“True Belonging”

The Passage: Romans 14:1-11

November 12 - 25

How to use the LC Study Guide

Hello Leaders! Thank you for your ongoing commitment to pursue Christian community and the study of Scripture—study that leads to life transformation in Christ and strives to serve “the other.”

These studies have been designed with the following aspects in mind:

1. To facilitate a discussion on the passage of Scripture that was preached that particular Sunday using the Inductive Bible Study Method (not necessarily on the themes of that particular sermon). In summary, this method stresses “Observation” (what the reader can see from the text), “Interpretation” (what we can learn when we study the text with various tools, commentaries, and resources), and “Application” (how we can apply the Scripture to our lives).
2. Groups using this study range from the new leader to the highly experienced. Groups themselves have their own context. This study attempts to hit the middle. The stronger studies require about an hour or two of leader preparation to contextualize this resource to the needs and personalities of your group.
3. In addition to prep time, please spend time in prayer during preparation and before and after the study. It’s the power of the Holy Spirit that illuminates the Word of Scripture and we are humbled that He uses our combined efforts as part of this work. (For more tips on using this study, please see the endnotes.)

As always, we are so grateful for you, your gifting, your servant leadership, and all that you do for the cause of Christ. Please let us know if we can help you in any way.

Grace and peace,
Pastor Tim, on behalf of the LC Team

¹Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters. ²One person’s faith allows them to eat anything, but another, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. ³The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not, and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does, for God has accepted them. ⁴Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To their own master, servants stand or fall. And they will stand, for the Lord is able to make them stand.

⁵ One person considers one day more sacred than another; another considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind.⁶ Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. Whoever eats meat does so to the Lord, for they give thanks to God; and whoever abstains does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.⁷ For none of us lives for ourselves alone, and none of us dies for ourselves alone.⁸ If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.⁹ For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

¹⁰ You, then, why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you treat them with contempt? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.¹¹ It is written:

“‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord,
‘every knee will bow before me;
every tongue will acknowledge God.’”

Romans 14:1-11

Passage context from New Testament historian/theologian N.T. Wright:

“This is similar to the problem Paul faced in 1 Corinthians 8, but perhaps with a further twist as well. There, the question had to do with meat that had been offered to an idol, that is, slaughtered as a sacrifice in a pagan temple and then either served up in the adjoining restaurant or offered for sale in the market. No devout Jew would dream of eating such meat.

“Many of the early Christians, too, having been regular attenders at pagan temples before their conversion, and knowing full well the kind of lifestyle that went with it all, avoided anything that reminded them of it. That was the context in which Paul insisted equally (a) that, since God was the creator, all meat was good in itself and therefore could in principle be eaten and (b) that if someone else's conscience was being hurt, even those who had a robust conscience about eating the food should abstain from doing so.

“In the present chapter that discussion has broadened out a bit, probably to include those Jews who would become vegetarians in practice because, in their part of the city, they could not guarantee being able to get meat that had been properly slaughtered according to the ‘kosher’ laws laid down in the Bible and interpreted in Jewish tradition. Unless there was a proper Jewish butcher available, it might well have seemed the wiser course to abstain not only from pork, as Jews would anyway (though pork was the cheapest and most readily available meat in that world), but from all meat of whatever kind.”¹

¹ Wright, T. (2004). [*Paul for Everyone: Romans, Part 2: Chapters 9-16*](#) (pp. 95–96). London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

O – Reread the passage slowly to yourself. What stands out as appealing to you? What stands out as confusing?

I – As you may have heard from a favorite preacher ;) the Greek word for the first word of the passage, “Accept”, is “*proselambano*” (pronounced pros-lam-bano) which means to move towards to enthusiastically receive someone. How do you think the culture of life, church, and society would change if Christ-followers modeled Paul’s teaching when it comes to disputable matters?

A – We might think of the father in the prodigal son story as moving out to welcome his wayward son back home. Whether it be in Scripture or from your personal life, what other examples can you think of when you have seen or experienced *proslambano*?

I – “Weak in faith” is perhaps an inaccurate translation. Paul does not necessarily mean a lack of religious devotion or having a shaky grasp on the basic tenets of the Christian faith. It seems his point is that some believers, possibly because they are new in the faith, have not yet been able to work out what it means to live a life having now believed in the risen Lord Jesus. How does this term and thus, the passage change if we understand “weak in faith” more as “inexperienced” or new to the faith? How does our posture towards them and to the “weak in the faith” around us change as we consider they are not deficient, but rather, they are inexperienced?

(Hopefully words like acceptance, hospitality, seeking to understand, and others have been mentioned. When we receive the “young in faith” our posture should include mercy, patience, and sincere Christian love.)

It’s also helpful to remember that the first readers of Romans were likely people who knew Paul and by this point had been Christian followers for a few years. These might be the people who get shout-outs at the end of Romans 16. Paul does not want new believers and seekers to be intimidated by an “old guard” and also does not want unnecessary quarreling, especially when there are far more important issues at hand when it comes to the survival and flourishing of the early church. And so this became a key teaching at this point in the letter to this early church.)

A – Who are the weak in faith around us? How can we show patience and hospitality towards them? If it helps, consider when you were once weak in the faith or consider where you are weak in the faith now. What would have best served you as you worked out your faith?

A – At Grace Chapel, we have been on a sermon journey focused on the idea that once we belong to Jesus, we can belong also to one another in Christian community. How does a Scripture passage like this help us in our understanding of belonging?

- a. Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
- b. Complement these questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?)
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
- e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching” rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.